



Congressman

**Wally
Herger**

Reports from Washington



108th Congress - First Session

Volume Two

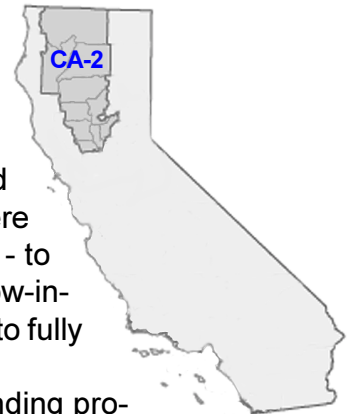


Dear Friends:

In the nearly five months since coalition military action began in Iraq, America's armed forces have accomplished the unbelievable. Moving farther and faster than any armed force in the history of mankind, our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines swept in from Kuwait to expel the tyrannical Iraqi dictator and his barbaric government, and are now establishing the roots of freedom in the long oppressed nation. There should be no doubt that through our actions we have made our nation a safer place.

At home we are beginning to witness economic recovery, brought about by three tax relief measures proposed by President Bush and passed into law by Congress. And while it is still happening slowly, our economy is steadily showing signs of improvement, including higher consumer and investor confidence levels.

In the past few months, Congress has been busy considering a number of updates to existing laws. In June, the House and Senate approved different versions of a Medicare improvement bill, including a voluntary prescription drug benefit, and additional assistance for rural areas. Nearly 4 million Californians rely on Medicare for the quality health services they need most - which is why Congress is working to ensure that Medicare will be there in the future. The House has also approved legislation - that I co-authored - to extend the nation's welfare reform bill, and guarantee that we help more low-income Americans achieve independence through work. The Senate has yet to fully consider its version of this bill.



As we pursue these goals, and work on completing the annual spending process, it is essential that Congress remains committed to the principle of fiscal discipline. Short-term solutions and excessive government spending will only hinder the progress we have made on economic recovery.

Unfortunately, as we are witnessing in other parts of the west, it is shaping up to be another devastating forest fire season. California also faces an imminent water crisis. Despite this, the radical environmental community is doing everything possible, using the overreaching Endangered Species Act, to prohibit sound forest management and adequate water storage. I will continue to work to modernize our species protection laws, and will promote ways to increase water storage and flood protections.

As always, your thoughts and input are valuable to me as I seek to better represent the interests of northern California in Washington. Inside this report you will find my 2003 Congressional Questionnaire. I hope you will fill this out and return it to me. If you have access to the Internet, feel free

to visit my web site at <http://www.house.gov/herger/>.

CALIFORNIA OFFICES:

55 INDEPENDENCE CIRCLE,
SUITE 104
CHICO, CA 95973
(530) 893-8363

410 HEMSTED DRIVE, SUITE 115
REDDING, CA 96002
(530) 223-5898

Sincerely,

WALLY HERGER
Member of Congress

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Fire Season: Time for a Change



Last year's blazes were some of the worst on record, consuming more than 7 million acres of forest, 2000 structures, and forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes. Most tragically, twenty-one fire fighters died trying to control the infernos. In all, American taxpayers spent more than \$1 billion in wildfire suppression costs in 2002, added to the already expensive cost of clean up and restoration to devastated communities. If the problem of deteriorating forest health is not aggressively addressed, there is no reason to presume this year's fire season will be any more forgiving.

For years, land managers and experts have warned of a dangerous overabundance of forest fuels and a risk of unnaturally large and destructive fires. However, as Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth testified to Congress, his agency is unable to do enough about it, being strangled by what he called "analysis paralysis," or complying with endless layers of red tape to defend against legal challenges from radical environmentalists. As the Forest Service spends millions of dollars on a paper chase of process and compliance, locally conceived fuels reduction projects remain on the shelf waiting to be implemented.

Using lawsuits, administrative appeals, procedural delays and political pressure, some groups of environmentalists have brought sound forest management to a grinding halt. Hundreds of mills and jobs have been lost, leaving once thriving communities to wither while their valuable natural resources become an unmanaged tinderbox.

We know the cause. And we know the solutions. Aggressive action must be taken to streamline the project



Congressman Herger speaks on the dedication of the American Byways Scenic highway in Weed, and its importance to the northern California community.

approval process and put an end to obstructionism. For this reason, I became an original cosponsor of President Bush's Healthy Forests Initiative. The bill, proposed in the aftermath of last year's fire season, contains solutions to cut unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, and provides local land managers the flexibility they need to implement forest health and community protection projects. While it will be an uphill political battle, I am firmly committed to seeing this legislation enacted. It has already been approved in the House, and is currently awaiting action in the Senate.

We're never going to prevent all fires. Fires are an inevitable part of the forested areas in which we live. But we do know that through a system of thinning, we can create forests that are less dense, healthier and more fire-resilient, and give fire fighters a fighting chance on the ground. And the more we are able to educate people about the risks of poor forest health, the more support we will gain to make positive changes. This is the intent of a "Woods Tour" that I participate in each year in Siskiyou County; to gather experts to educate state and nationally elected representatives about proper forest management, as well as the dangers of allowing the forests to go untreated. This past June we held our 11th annual tour, which was attended by four members of the California State Assembly and two U.S. Representatives.

Good forest management has been stymied for too long. It's time to get local citizens involved in the process, and time to finally address the costly threat of catastrophic fire.

Legislative Update



Congressman Herger

Voted for H.R. 1, the "Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003" - provides a voluntary senior prescription drug benefit for Medicare beneficiaries. Makes changes in the law to allow for updates in medicine and other medical innovations. (Passed in House)

Voted for H.R. 2, the "Jobs and Growth Tax Act of 2003" - provides much-needed tax relief to individuals, families, and small businesses to create jobs immediately, while generating long-term economic growth in the future. (Signed into Law)

Cosponsored H.R. 303, the "Retired Pay Restoration Act" - permits retired Armed Forces members with a service-connected disability to receive both military retired pay and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. (Pending Committee Action)

Coauthored H.R. 4, the "Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act of 2003" - proposes updates to the successful 1996 welfare reform law. Promotes independence through strengthened time limits and work requirements. (Passed in House, Pending in Senate)



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**Service Academy Applications Due
October 31, 2003**

Rep. Wally Herger

**55 Independence Circle, Suite 104
Chico, CA 95973**



Congressman Herger's 2003 Congressional Questionnaire

Please mark your responses, cut out this page and fold so return address on other side faces outward.

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Congressman Wally Herger
2268 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Return Address (please print)
Name _____
Street _____
City _____
State _____
Zip Code _____

Place
Stamp
Here

Congress Considers Senior Prescription Drug Legislation



Nearly 40 years since Medicare's founding in 1965, the program is in need of a major modernization. The House of Representatives recently voted to add a voluntary prescription drug benefit for seniors enrolled in the Medicare program, while making other updates to incorporate medical innovations.

Despite our advances in medical science, in many ways, Medicare today still offers seniors 1965 coverage. In fact, until recently, Medicare didn't even cover annual screenings for breast or prostate cancer - an important element of preventive care. More importantly, today's Medicare lacks a prescription drug benefit to help seniors pay for life-saving medicines. The average senior citizen spends roughly \$1,300 per year on prescriptions, forcing them to have to make tough financial decisions, or go without necessary medication. The House bill offers seniors the right to choose the drug plan that is best for them under Medicare - in either the traditional fee-for-service Medicare plan or from other health providers. The bill also provides immediate relief in

the form of a prescription drug discount card, which would bring savings of 10-25 percent. By allowing seniors a wider range of options for health care coverage under Medicare, the House bill will strengthen the Medicare program, making it more effective for beneficiaries, thereby extending the overall life of the program. And nobody will be forced into an HMO.

The existing Medicare+Choice system offers healthcare on a county-to-county basis, which has spelled the end of provider coverage in areas like ours, where fewer residents means a lower profit margin for the providers. However, under the new system, Enhanced Medicare, health care providers would be required to offer service in rural areas to gain access to the more profitable urban areas. The legislation would also increase funding for rural hospitals and other rural providers to the tune of \$28 billion. Both of these factors would lead to more secure health care for seniors in the north state, and make it easier to recruit qualified physicians.

The House has passed prescription drug legislation three times in recent years, only to have it stalled by partisan politics. Fortunately, this year it appears the Senate is also poised to approve a final Medicare prescription drug bill. It is my hope that Congress will send this plan to President Bush very soon, so we can truly fulfill our promise to America's seniors to provide them the best health care possible.



Following a recent Medicare town hall meeting at the Shasta Senior Nutrition Center in Redding, Dr. Christina Beato and Congressman Herger visit with employees at neighboring Mercy Medical Center to discuss updates to the Medicare system and the new senior prescription drug benefit.

Congressman
Wally Herger

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Official Business

Wally Herger
M.C.
Presorted Standard



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2003 Congressional Questionnaire